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Toward the Ideal Journeyman

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Volume 5. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS VIEW APPRENTICESHIP

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Manpower Administration

Toward the Ideal Journeyman

Volume 5. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS VIEW APPRENTICESHIP

1971

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR J.D. Hodgson, Secretary

Manpower Administration

PREFACE

This volume is the fifth and final one of a monograph being published by the Department of Labor's Manpower Administration. It is based on a study of apprenticeship which was conducted under contract with the Office of Research and Development of the Manpower Administration. The overall study was completed in 1969.

In the first volume, the researchers from Purdue University explored the elements of an optimum apprenticeship system that are necessary to produce skilled craftsmen fully capable of coping with today's rapidly changing technology; the purpose of this was to set up a model for training programs. Subsequent volumes related to the findings from the study of apprenticeship programs in specific trades: plumbing-pipefitting, machine tool and die making, and selected printing crafts. In this fifth volume, the attitudes of 10th, 11th, and 12th grade boys toward apprenticeable trades are examined. When girls are surveyed also, we will perhaps begin to see the effects of changing attitudes of laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits sex discrimination in employment.

Much needs to be done to make our occupational training system as effective as it needs to be. It is hoped that this monograph will be used by school counselors, teachers, and other educators, and by government and industry in seeing that those changes are made.

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INTRODUCTION

Although apprenticeship has long been considered to be among the best ways of training for a skilled occupation, there recently has been a realization of how little is known about it. This realization came about as civil rights groups began to publicize how few apprentices were Negroes.

The major part of this study was devoted to finding out what apprentices and journeymen in three trades thought about apprenticeship. The final part, which this volume concentrates upon, concerns the results of a survey of high school boys' attitudes toward apprenticeship and careers in the skilled trades. Consideration of these results reinforces the conclusion that little is known about apprenticeship and their trades outside the trades themselves. Probably, those who dropped out of school before this survey was taken have even less knowledge of the trades.

The researchers questioned more than 2,000 students from the 10th through the 12th grades in 22 public schools in school systems that were within 170 miles of Lafayette, Ind. These included school systems in Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Data were also obtained from principals and counselors in these schools.

The responding students were classified both according to socioeconomic status (SES) and race—"white," "Negro," and "other."

Each student was categorized as belonging to one of five SES categories. The measurement for classification was a weighted combination of a boy's father's occupational and educational

attainments. For example, a student whose father was a corporate executive with a college degree was listed in the top (1) SES category, while a student whose father was an unskilled laborer who did not finish high school was ranked in the lowest (5) SES category. Children of skilled tradesmen were generally classified as belonging to the third or fourth categories.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between the father's occupation and the child's academic achievement. The study was conducted in a large urban school district. The sample consisted of 1,000 students in the fifth grade. The data were collected from the school records. The results of the study are presented in the following sections. The first section discusses the methodology of the study. The second section presents the results of the study. The third section discusses the implications of the study. The fourth section presents the conclusions of the study.

STUDENTS' OCCUPATIONAL GOALS

Fifteen percent of the students sampled—326 out of 2,175—indicated that they intended to enter a skilled trade after graduation. About one-third of these expressed a preference for apprenticeship as a method of entering their chosen occupations. The remainder indicated a preference for entering a skilled trade via trade school or “just working at it.”

Negro students showed slightly less knowledge of apprenticeship than did whites; however, a slightly higher proportion of Negroes than whites answered with a definite “yes” to the question as to whether they had any plans to become an apprentice.¹

Most students planned to enter white-collar occupations as professionals, managers, clerical workers, engineers, etc., rather than to become skilled tradesmen or other blue-collar workers. This marked preference for white-collar jobs was true regardless of the students' socioeconomic levels or grades in high school.

The pull toward white-collar occupations as opposed to careers in skilled trades diminished along with diminishing academic achievement and lower SES levels. For example, 93 percent of the students in the highest SES category intended to enter white-collar occupations; in the lowest SES level, 58 percent expressed a white-collar preference. Similarly, students with the highest grades, regardless of socioeconomic ranking,

¹ Since there were so few Negroes in the first two SES categories, only the three lower levels were used in the analysis.

had the strongest leaning toward white-collar careers. In the case of students with both the highest SES levels and grades, 100 percent leaned toward white-collar careers. However, those students who came from the poorest backgrounds and recorded the lowest grades still indicated a clear-cut preference for a white-collar future.

One can only speculate as to how much of these intentions are due to the recent efforts to encourage students to go into white-collar work. Nevertheless, the percentage of those who plan to enter the skilled trades (15 percent) does not seem out of line with that percentage of the labor force now employed in the skilled trades (12½ percent).

While the survey showed that the largest percentages of male high school students who intend to become skilled tradesmen are those who come from the lowest socioeconomic levels and those with lower grades, it is well to remember that aspirations change as the youth mature.

"Of those enrolled in high school in 1967 who were also in school in 1966, roughly three in ten had revised their educational goals—29 percent of the white youths and 35 percent of the black. It is noteworthy that downward revision of aspirations between 1966 and 1967 was only slightly more frequent than upward changes, with reductions more common among those who had aspired to college, and increases rather more prevalent for those who had planned on high school graduation only. Among those who in 1967 were high school seniors, raised horizons were more frequent than lowered ones in the case of the whites, while the opposite is true among blacks."²

² Frederick A. Zeller, John R. Shea, Andrew I. Kohen, and Jack A. Meyer, *Career Thresholds: A Longitudinal Study of the Educational and Labor Market Experiences of Male Youth* (Columbus, Ohio: Center for Human Resource Research, the Ohio State University, October 1970) vol. II, p. 64.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND INFLUENCES

The sources from which the students said they had heard about apprenticeship varied. In order of frequency, the top three sources were the teacher or principal, father, and high school counselor. Other sources cited, in descending order, were older friend, employer, friend of own age, neighbor, brother, union official, uncle or grandfather, and mother. In the case of the student from the middle and two lower SES levels, there was little relationship between the source from which he had learned the most about apprenticeship and his intention to become an apprentice. However, it was perhaps significant that a larger percentage of students from these levels who indicated an intent to become skilled tradesmen were those who reported certain sources of "most" information. These sources were high school, employer, union official, friend of own age, neighbor or older friend, mother, brother or uncle, and father.

Only about 1 student in 10 stated that he had discussed apprenticeship—or even the subject of jobs, for that matter—with anyone from the State employment service or one of its Youth Opportunity Centers, or a joint apprenticeship committee.

Schools and the State Employment Service

When asked specifically whether certain persons or agencies—principal, guidance counselor, State employment service, fellow

students—had given them information about apprenticeship or encouraged them to enter it, Negro students were more likely than white ones to respond that they received help from one or more of these sources. For example, 14 percent of the black students from the third SES category reported they received their primary help or encouragement from school principals, while only 2 percent of the white students at the same SES level designated principals as their main source of information. Similarly, 38 percent of the Negro respondents in this level indicated guidance counselors as their prime sources, compared to 19 percent of the whites.

However, what may be more important is that a considerably higher proportion of Negroes in the third SES category than Negroes in the two bottom SES categories reported receiving information from virtually all the sources mentioned above. For instance, while 14 percent of the third-category black respondents cited school principals as their basic source, not a single black student at the lowest SES level reported that his principal had given him trade training advice or encouragement. While guidance counselors provided the main assistance to 38 percent of the third-category black students, they were the chief source of guidance to only 19 percent of the blacks in the 5th SES category.

A higher percentage (16 percent) of black respondents in the fifth SES level relied on the agency as their prime source of guidance on apprenticeship training opportunities than did blacks in the third and fourth higher levels (5 percent).

To the researchers, the meaning of the data was clear. School principals and guidance counselors were not giving information and encouragement concerning apprenticeship training to Negro students in the lowest socioeconomic levels to the extent that they were giving it to those from middle class backgrounds.

The survey results showed that there was no clear pattern between a high school's general counseling and vocational guidance programs and the students' choices of occupational careers. However, some of the general findings were:

1. There is a negative relationship between the adequacy of the *general* counseling program and the counselor's knowledge of apprenticeship and favorable attitude toward it. That is, in the schools with these adequate general counseling programs, the attitudes of the students toward apprenticeship were less favorable than were those of students in the schools with less comprehensive general counseling.

2. In the more adequate *vocational* guidance programs, as opposed to general counseling programs, the students received more information and encouragement regarding apprenticeship training.

3. The more adequate the *vocational* guidance program is, the fewer are the number of students in the top socioeconomic levels who plan to enter a skilled trade. But in the case of students in the 5th SES level, the better the vocational guidance program, the more students there are in these categories who indicate a leaning toward a skilled trade.

4. Men counselors have slightly more knowledge about apprenticeship than women advisers, but men are slightly less apt than women to advise students to consider apprenticeship as opposed to college.

5. When counselors were members of a national professional guidance association, the interest of their two upper SES level students in becoming apprentices decreased and at the same time there was no increase in interest among their students at the two lower SES levels. The researchers did not attempt to interpret this data. However, these facts tend to suggest that such professional associations are college or white-collar oriented—perhaps unduly so, in view of the current need for recruits for the skilled crafts and the solid, well paying career opportunities afforded by modern apprenticeship.

Family Attitudes and Occupations

Each student was asked how he believed each of his parents would feel about his entry into a skilled trade. Two main findings emerged. First, the lower the socioeconomic background of the student, the more favorable were his father and mother toward his entering a skilled trade. Second, at every SES level, the mother showed slightly less favor than the father toward the idea of their son pursuing an apprenticeable trade.

Fathers who were themselves skilled tradesmen and their wives were more favorable to their sons' entry into skilled trades than were parents whose livelihood came from other blue-collar work.

Although a son was more apt to plan on apprenticeship if both parents were favorably disposed toward a skilled trade, the presence of one supporter appeared to be enough. The son was equally apt to

plan apprenticeship if the mother was the only parent in favor as when the father was the sole proponent.

As would be expected, those students who had a good number of relatives holding jobs as skilled tradesmen had stronger intentions of entering skilled trades than those students with fewer or no relatives so employed. However, the difference in intent based on this factor was moderate. No relationship was found between the number of relatives a student had in the skilled crafts and his preference for apprenticeship as opposed to other ways of learning a skilled trade.

Pay Expectations

To assess the students' expectations of pay in the skilled trades, they were asked to estimate the weekly salary of an apprentice and a journeyman. The answers of the white students ranged from \$174 to \$180 for a journeyman, and from \$99 to \$108 for an apprentice. The range of answers among the black students was \$195 to \$208 for a journeyman, and \$117 to \$142 for an apprentice.

The higher estimates quoted by the blacks were closer to reality, even though it can be surmised that the Negro students were probably less acquainted with skilled tradesmen and their salaries. The students at the lower end of the SES scale gave higher estimates than did the students at the higher end of the scale.

The researchers did not attempt to explain why the students in the lower SES categories gave higher salary estimates, or why Negroes gave higher estimates than whites, other than to theorize that relative deprivation may be the answer.

The results of the survey showed almost no evidence of any relationship between the students' salary estimates for a journeyman and an apprentice and their own aspirations for skilled trades careers. However, it was found that those students who strongly subscribed to the statement that "apprentices get paid well" were more apt to lean toward entering apprenticeship than were those whose agreement with the statement was mild or who challenged it.

In the case of Negro students, a greater discrepancy was found between their indication of general interest in apprenticeship and definite intent to become apprentices. This suggested to the researchers that Negroes are more apt than whites to perceive barriers to their entry into apprenticeship.

Educational and Labor Market Trends

The proportion of high school graduates who go to college has been rising for a long time. Between 1958 and 1968, the number of bachelor's and first professional degrees earned increased by more than 80 percent—from 363,000 to 667,000. These soaring graduation figures stemmed mainly from growth in the proportion of young people entering college because of economic and social pressures and motivations. The trend is expected to continue.

The greatest growth in job opportunities in the past two decades or so has been in the white-collar occupations—professional and technical employment such as accounting, teaching, engineering, social work, and programing. Over the same time span, the rise in the number of craftsmen and other blue-collar workers has been relatively modest; thus, the number of such workers has declined as a proportion of the labor force.

Much the same situation is expected to prevail in coming years. According to projections of the Department of Labor, manpower requirements in professional and technical occupations will be about 1½ times as high in 1980 as in 1968; these projections will encompass annual average increases of well over 400,000 in the number of professional-technical openings. This compares with an annual growth rate of 335,000 during the 10 years ended in 1968.

Obviously, the labor market is a strong determinant of career choices. The shift to white-collar jobs in the composition of the Nation's work force is a major explanation as to why potential apprentices are being siphoned off into white-collar fields.

Uncertainty of Employment

A further influence against the selection of a trade career is that unemployment in the crafts over a given period tends to be higher than in white-collar occupations. Demand for craft apprentices and journeymen is sensitive to business cycles. When economic conditions are good and general employment levels high, the demand for their services is high—often to the extent of producing skilled shortages. But during poorer times, when those already on the job are threatened with joblessness and even skilled craftsmen have been laid off, employers are resistant to hiring apprentices.

Factors other than business cycles contribute to intermittent employment in the trades. In construction, for example, seasonal unemployment has yet to be truly overcome despite half a century of discussion about methods of achieving all-weather building.

All of the above forces—the increasing attraction of college, the changing composition of the work force, and the higher risk of unemployment faced by the craftsman—contribute to the difficulties in recruitment for training in the skilled trades; however, they do not fully explain the lack of enthusiasm for such work among high school students. The low status into which blue-collar work has fallen must also be taken into consideration.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Only among the students in the lower SES categories or those with lower grades was there any significant sentiment in favor of a craft career; even in these cases, the sentiment was a minority one. Such findings are hardly encouraging to expansion of the apprenticeship system, since they indicate minor interest in trade training among those who constitute the predominant source of potential skilled craftsmen.

Assistant Secretary of Labor Jerome M. Rosow, recently commenting on the low esteem into which blue-collar work unjustifiably has fallen stated:³

"The American working man has lost relative class status with the growth of higher education. Changes in the nature of the labor force have dramatized the professional and technical experts to the relative detriment of the skilled worker. Skilled workers also have hostility toward those below them at semi-skilled and unskilled levels and the feeling is mutual. But all blue-collar workers, skilled or not, have been denigrated so badly—so harshly—that their jobs have become a last resort, instead of decent, respected careers. Manual and skilled occupations have become almost invisible in terms of the propaganda of today. Fathers

³ Memorandum from Assistant Secretary of Labor Jerome M. Rosow to Secretary of Labor George P. Shultz, April 16, 1970.

hesitate—and even apologize—for their occupations instead of holding it up as an aspiration for their sons. This attack has been so strong, so emotional and so unfounded that the workers have suffered a loss of self respect and the Nation is suffering a loss of future manpower. . . .

“According to union leaders, the blue-collar worker increasingly feels that his work has no ‘status’ in the eyes of society, the media, or even his own children. While the Nation has, in recent years, sold the importance of science and technology to our younger people, it has neglected to communicate the importance of some ten million skilled blue-collar workers who are responsible for transforming the ideas of scientists and the plans of engineers into tangible goods and services. These workers make and maintain the models, tools and machines without which industrial processes could not be carried out. They exercise considerable independent judgment and are responsible for extremely valuable equipment and products. . . .

“Schools tend to reinforce this tendency, since most teachers know little about blue-collar work. So do the media; the only publicity given to workers is when they are out on strike and there they are often shown in a bad light.

“Adding to the problem is that fact that the long-term narrowing of manual skill wage differentials (temporarily halted) has relatively worsened the position of semi- and skilled blue-collar workers compared to the unskilled. At the same time, high-skilled white-collar workers have been making substantial and publicized improvements in their economic position, with salary increases often far higher than wage increases. Furthermore, the educated workers with college and advanced degrees have been getting the biggest pay gains.

“The result is chronic and inflationary shortages in many skilled blue-collar fields; a feeling of ‘failure’ for the many youth who won’t get white collar jobs; exacerbation of racial friction when black youth refuse to take ‘dirty’ blue-collar jobs offered them ‘by a white society,’ even when they may be good-paying; and a

general resentment by blue-collar workers which is translated into wage demands.”

Apprenticeship Today

Although the obstacles to recruitment are plentiful, it should be emphasized that apprenticeship is very much a flourishing institution. There are today some 350 apprenticeable occupations in a variety of industries; in the past 25 years, the number of registered apprentices has risen from 57,000 to 274,000. About 123,000 new apprentices—including a record 12,000 from minority groups—were admitted to registered programs during 1969; this pushed the total number in training as of January 1, 1970, to a new high of 273,952.

“While it is undoubtedly true that many apprenticeship programs are too inflexible, have unrealistic entry standards, and require unnecessarily long training, the better programs probably turn out skilled craftsmen who have higher incomes and more stable employment, because they are better able to adjust to different work situations and to technological change. Although this question needs to be studied in greater detail, apprenticeship training probably is a relatively low-cost method of acquiring skills and probably yields high returns to individual craftsmen, unions, employees, and the nation.”⁴

Helping in the recruitment effort has been the establishment of Apprenticeship Information Centers in 37 major cities. Developed since 1963, the centers provide central and easily accessible sources of information, guidance, and counseling on apprenticeship opportunities. In the 3 fiscal years ending June 30, 1970, nearly 90,000 persons were tested, counseled, and referred to apprenticeship sponsors, and 22,000 wound up as full-fledged apprentices.

A parallel effort aimed at recruiting minorities into apprenticeship has been conducted through locally sponsored Apprenticeship Outreach⁵ programs. First launched in 1965, these programs now operate in more than 80 metropolitan areas. They “reach out” to minority youth and help them to become apprentices by assisting

⁴ F. Ray Marshall and Vernon Briggs, Jr., *The Negro and Apprenticeship* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 229. This book is based on a report prepared under a contract with the Department of Labor.

⁵ Funded by the Manpower Administration and monitored by its Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training.

them in passing apprentice-entry tests through intensive tutoring. This approach has been highly successful and the program is continually expanding to additional areas. So far, 8,000 minority youth have been placed in formal apprenticeships through this avenue. While the Apprenticeship Outreach programs have concentrated on the construction trades, the concept is adaptable to a variety of apprenticeable occupations in a number of industries.

Recommendations

For the future, the first job is to change conditions of apprenticeship to make them more suited to the needs of youth and employers. The first four volumes of this monograph are devoted to this topic.

Second, in order that students and those who advise them will have a more accurate view of apprenticeship, changing conditions and facts about which there are misconceptions must be publicized. It is hoped that this monograph will stimulate such action where it is needed. Following are some suggested methods.

The Educational System. Perhaps the greatest need is to tighten the link between the apprenticeship system and educational institutions. Bringing about closer ties between apprenticeship and school systems will require that national unions and employer associations with jurisdiction over apprenticeable occupations cooperate and coordinate their policies with a view toward fostering improved forms of vocational education. This necessitates action toward involving both their regional and local affiliates more closely in program development and operation.

The creation of strong policies along this line might mean that unions and employers would foster work-study programs in the schools and assume a larger role in establishing industrial clubs for youth in schools. These clubs emphasize the importance of craftsmanship, enthusiasm for learning, the dignity of work, and other attributes necessary for personal growth and adjustment to work conditions.

Vocational Guidance. National employer groups and unions, in cooperation with their affiliates, should develop standards leading to the certification of vocational education courses. Students completing certified programs could receive credits for entry into apprenticeship or gain advanced standing.

Employers and unions, working together under general and forceful policy directives of national bodies, can press for the establishment of more and better vocational guidance programs in our high schools; such programs are significantly lacking today. Employers and unions can develop attractive literature on career opportunities in the trades and see that this material is generously distributed to school principals, guidance counselors, and teachers—many of whose knowledge of the trade training system is sketchy or nonexistent. Equally important, the school personnel should be informed about where to refer students for added information. Federal, State, and local governments should be even more active in publicizing successful programs and the means of achieving them.

Such basic steps can be supplemented by regular visits by employers, craftsmen, and members of joint apprenticeship committees to their local schools, perhaps in conjunction with presentation of vocational guidance films for youth on skilled trade opportunities. Certainly, development of a series of such films for recruitment purposes is an essential facet of an effective communications program for a trade.

School principals, guidance counselors, and teachers should be encouraged to visit plants and sites where apprentices are at work, as well as to monitor related instruction sessions, in order to gain a better perspective of trade training. These steps, together with the fostering of "career days" in the schools, would do much toward convincing school personnel to actively recruit youth for apprenticeship. Few counselors or teachers do so today.

Community Action. Also, there exists a necessity for closer ties between the apprenticeship system and the community at large. PTA's offer an effective forum for the presentation of the apprenticeship story not only to teachers but also to parents, whose attitudes toward trade training have been shown to significantly influence the career choices of their sons. Union and management officials should endeavor to present updated information on the workings and advantages of the apprenticeship system to the variety of civic groups that are found in any community. These organizations hold many luncheons and other meetings calling for guest speakers on a wide range of subjects. Employers and unions in an apprenticeable trade should have speakers available for such meetings. And civic organizations should be made aware of the availability of speakers on the topic of apprenticeship. Perhaps a

union-management "speakers bureau" for spreading the story of apprenticeship in a particular trade, or of apprenticeship generally, bears exploring. However, the ideal is for the apprenticeship spokesman to be a member of the community he is addressing.

Such events as national awards for outstanding craftsmen should be well publicized, particularly in the communities from which the winners come. This involves making sure that the hometown newspaper editor and radio and television stations know about the award through a press release or direct contact. Similarly, news stories dealing with newly started apprenticeship classes, new program features, and class graduations should be distributed to the press, particularly community weeklies. Published news stories on apprenticeship activities carry much impact in shaping favorable community attitudes.

Information on the requirements and starting dates of apprenticeship classes should be made widely known.

One of the most pressing problems confronting minority youth interested in apprenticeship is the lack of information about such matters as eligibility, application procedures, and details concerning specific programs.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MANPOWER PROGRAMS

The major purpose of the U.S. Department of Labor's Manpower Administration is to bring people and jobs together. For more information on manpower programs and services in your area, contact your Regional Manpower Administrator at the address listed below or the nearest office of your State employment service.

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